Claims:

1. A portable pouch for cooling and storing vials and the like, said pouch comprising:
   (a) a first web member of water permeable material;
   (b) a second web member of water permeable material;
   (c) hinge means connecting an edge of said first web member, directly or indirectly, to said second web member;
   (d) fastening means for fastening remaining edges of said first web member to said second web member, wherein at least one of said web members includes a plurality of compartments each containing water-absorbent granular material and said hinge means is free of such compartments.

2. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein each of said web members comprises a plurality of said compartments.

3. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein each of said web members is of a quadrilateral shape.

4. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein each of said web members is integrally formed from a single web, arranged to be folded along said hinge means.

5. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said fastening means comprise at least one first element comprising a multiplicity of hooks, and at least one complementary second element comprising a multiplicity of loops engageable with said hooks.

6. A pouch according to claim 5, wherein said complementary elements are in the form of strip or tape.

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7. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said web members are arranged to be fastened together by said fastening means in such a way that one end of one said web member extends beyond a free edge of the other of said web members, so as to form a flap foldable over a marginal portion of said other web member.

8. A pouch according to claim 7, wherein said flap has fastening means on a first face of said one web member for engagement with complementary fastening means on the marginal portion on said other web.

9. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said hinge means are arranged to connect an edge of said first web member directly to said second web member.

10. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said hinge means are arranged to connect an edge of said first web indirectly to said second web member.

11. A pouch according to claim 10, wherein an intervening panel connects said hinge means to said second web member.

12. A pouch according to claim 10, which is arranged to form a substantially closed box.

13. A pouch according to claim 12, wherein said second web member provides a closure for a tray constituted by said first web member, said intervening panel and a plurality of edge panels.

14. A pouch according to claim 13, wherein said first web member, said second web member, said intervening panel and said edge panels are formed from a single web.

15. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said edges are along longitudinally extending edges of the respective web members.

16. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said water permeable material comprises a durable, flexible textile material.

17. A pouch according to claim 16, wherein said textile material comprises a woven fabric.

18. A pouch according to claim 17, wherein said woven fabric comprises a polyester/cotton fabric blend.

19. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said water-absorbent material is one which is capable of regeneration after it has been dried out.

20. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said water-absorbent material comprises a polymeric material.

21. A pouch according to claim 20, wherein said polymeric material comprises an acrylic polymer.

22. A pouch according to claim 21, wherein said acrylic polymer comprises a cross-linked acrylate or methacrylate polymer.

23. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said granular material has a transition between respective hydrated forms at or close to ambient temperature.

24. A pouch according to claim 1, wherein said compartments containing said water-absorbent material are formed by sewing an elongate double skinned web member in sewing lines extending along the length of said web member.

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25. A pouch according to claim 24, which includes a plurality of said sewing lines which divide said web members lengthwise into a plurality of said compartments.

26. A pouch according to claim 25, wherein at least one further sewing line is provided transverse to said lengthwise direction.

27. A pouch according to claim 26, wherein said further sewing line is provided along said hinge means.

28. A pouch according to claim 1, which is flexible.

29. A method of storing a closed container of medicine, which comprises providing a pouch according to claim 1, treating the web members thereof with cold water, so as to cause swelling of said water-absorbent material within said compartments, and disposing said container within the pouch while the compartments contain the swollen water-absorbent material.

30. A method according to claim 29, wherein said container is a vial.

31. A pouch according to claim 1, in combination with a sachet shaped and dimensioned to receive said pouch.

32. A combination according to claim 31, wherein said sachet is of a breathable moisture-absorbing fabric.